I am pleased to announce that Barbara Fails, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Horticulture and Assistant Director for Outreach in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, has agreed to join our staff as Director of Instructional Outreach beginning on February 1. With her experience in program development within CANR, Fails brings just the skills needed to extend more of the University’s graduate and continuing professional education programs to all parts of Michigan and, using advanced distance education technology, beyond.

Fails will take a leading role in helping enact the University’s commitment to making its instructional programs more widely and conveniently available to residents and organizations. She will assume direct responsibility for stimulating the development of new instructional programs across the departments and colleges of the University. Her portfolio will include degree programs and credit and continuing career development certificate programs, with a special emphasis on incorporating distance educational technologies into more facets of the University’s off-campus and continuing professional education efforts.

In addition, she will have major responsibility for coordinating the various services that the Office of the Vice Provost provides to support the academic units’ instructional outreach work. Among these services are the University’s six regional offices (with one in Detroit, Sandmann and Charles Baker-Clark, an outreach project with an electronic invitation to teachers to work independently.

The chosen model is participatory and developmental. Teachers, evaluators, and the project steering committee collaborate actively in defining the overall project benchmarks, in gathering and analyzing data, and in reflecting on both the process and the outcomes from a variety of perspectives. The emerging formative findings will continually change and refine the project as it proceeds.

The three overall goals of the MSU evaluation are:

- Construct a research shell of questions, issues, and inquiry processes
- Elicit periodic reflection on the information being collected, the process of the project, and the reactions and thoughts of the teachers
- Develop periodic reports on the project process and lessons learned

During the past 12 months, MSU evaluators have conducted three studies. The principal investigator on the evaluation project, Brian Silver, Ph.D., professor of political science, constructed a survey instrument consisting of 140 questions, of which about 10% were open-ended. A total of 34 teachers, or 81% of the group, returned the surveys, and Silver produced a full report on the baseline information.

In the second project, Mark Wilson, Ph.D., professor of geography, initiated a reflective “journaling” project with an electronic invitation to teachers to reflect periodically and in their own words and chosen format on their experiences as they worked through the project. Wilson performed an analysis of the 13 journals received in round one.

The third investigative piece was conducted by Lorilee Sandmann, Ph.D., Director, University Outreach. Sandmann and Charles Baker-Clark, a research assistant, conducted 45-60 minute personal interviews with 14 project stakeholders using a structured interview protocol with open-ended questions. The purpose was to elicit information on stakeholders’ perceptions of issues such as the definition of philanthropy, the purpose and impact of the project, and the potential factors influencing the project’s success.

Lessons learned from all three studies produced strongly convergent themes. The primary issue was, first, communication among teachers and then among the project leaders, school administrators, and peers. Communication was named a critical success factor in all phases of the project. Resources, including sufficient time, background materials, access to computer training, understanding the use of e-mail and the Internet, and the support and encouragement of school administrators, weighed heavily on the progress and satisfaction of the teachers. Another prime issue was finding sufficient motivation for the teachers to work independently.

An interesting and unexpected finding was that school culture, even more than state standardized assessments, might prove to be the largest hurdle in the successful implementation of the newly written philanthropy curricula. Another important lesson was that rewards for teacher participation in the project must exceed the high expected level of personal satisfaction and must include peer recognition, school board and school administration acknowledgment, and recognition by professional teacher and school organizations.

MSU evaluators will continue their work as the curriculum is piloted and infused over the next school year. Another survey will be conducted and more journal requests will be made of the teachers. Plans are under way to produce reports and disseminate them to a broad audience of stakeholders and educators.

To receive a full copy of the report, please contact Pat Miller at 432-0743 or by e-mail at mille193@msu.edu.
Early Head Start Program
Boosts Positive Life Chances

by Patricia Miller

Early intervention in the process of starting an infant’s life with healthy development positively affects the social, physical, and mental development of the young child. MSU Outreach Partnerships is working with community-based organizations to develop and evaluate programs to do just this—increase the chance for positive outcomes in infant and child development by involving the infant’s entire extended family with appropriate community services.

The Early Head Start program is offered to families who are pregnant or have a child ages birth to three. The program strives to meet the medical, physical, social, emotional, and developmental needs of children and to link families to support services.

Hiram Fitzgerald, Ph.D., Director, Applied Developmental Science and University Distinguished Professor, Department of Psychology, says, “The Early Head Start program not only assists the community in its efforts to provide improved services for children. It also assists the university in its efforts to apply knowledge in a collaborative learning environment that is mutually beneficial and satisfying.”

Early Head Start programs focus on the new or anticipated arrival and other family members such as moms, dads, significant others, and siblings. Services take place primarily in the home on a weekly basis for 1 ½ hours. Services include parent/infant activities, child development activities, support groups for family, linkages to community services and resources, and smooth transitions to traditional three- to five-year-old Head Start programs. In Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale counties, 76 families were served by Early Head Start last year, including 42 babies born into the program, under the auspices of the local Community Action Agency of Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale counties.

MSU’s faculty team includes Rachel Schuman, Ph.D., R.N.; Holly Brophy-Herb, Ph.D.; Dennis Keefe, Ph.D.; and Patricia Miller.

Family and Child Ecology:

• Cynthia Gibbons, Ph.D., R.N.
• Mildred Omar, Ph.D., R.N.

College of Nursing, who directs an interdisciplinary team of evaluators that includes:

College of Nursing:

• Cynthia Gibbons, Ph.D., R.N.
• Mildred Omar, Ph.D., R.N.

Family and Child Ecology:

• Dennis Keeve, Ph.D.
• Holly Brophy-Herb, Ph.D.

Department of Psychology:

• Hiram Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
• Thomas Reischl, Ph.D.

This team is looking at the success of the Early Head Start program. The MSU team is a research partner with the Community Action Agency of Jackson, Lenawee, and Hillsdale counties. The partnership objective is to examine the pathways of family health and family use of and retention in services and programs for high-risk infants and toddlers. In addition, the team oversees one of 37 sites participating in a national randomized clinical trial of the effectiveness of Early Head Start. Grants and contracts totaling $1.1M fund their part of a five-year randomized evaluation effort.

Schiffman says, “This partnership truly reflects the qualities of mutual respect, sharing, and good communications. We have shared two retreats, each other’s staff meetings, and we try to see each other’s points of view. CAA is committed to research and evaluation in order to help them improve their programs, and I believe that all of them for their courage to participate in a clinical trial.”

Cynthia Gibbons, co-principal investigator on the MSU team, heads up a new study called Newborn B that applies national funding to a secondary evaluation of “father figures,” whether biological or male family members/friends. Over a three-year period, along with ten other national sites, she plans an investigation of the role of men who are raising children and who are participating in the Early Head Start program in Jackson and at Greenville. She hopes the program will assist the men in their roles and responsibilities in the family and in encounters with social services. The ultimate goal will be to tailor services not only to women and children but also to men in order to foster a nurturing environment for children.

Gibbons says, “We’ve been able to bring unique practice-research perspectives to the table that make significant contributions to planning and implementation phases, leading to success in recruiting and retaining subjects.” Gibbons believes the benefits of university-community partnerships, such as the ability of the community to offer contextual insights about the meaning of community data, allow a series of “real-time” theoretical, empirical, and practical examples from which to create critical thinking exercises for the classroom environment. “University and community folks are committed to the education of future leaders; together they offer students an experience on a multidisciplinary team devoted to delivering the best services to low-income families.”

An additional study called “Defining Characteristics of Self-sufficiency” partners an MSU team comprising Bob Brown, Outreach Training Coordinator, Fitzgerald, Celeste Sturdevant Reed, M.S.W., MLIR, Rex LaMore, Ph.D., Director, Urban Affairs Center, Schiffman, and Brophy-Herb with Kreucher’s Community Action Agency.

Funded by the Jackson Community Foundation, the project is developing a model that seeks to define the pathway from limited self-sufficiency through involvement with program activities, to achieve outcomes that lead to building self-sufficient characteristics that may further lead to true self-sufficiency. Along the way, programs define outcomes and align themselves with these characteristics. The community has convened an advisory group from the Jackson area to guide the work of the team and help define the self-sufficiency characteristics. The project is one aspect of a larger community vision defining quality of life.

Brown says, “This project is an excellent example of how partnerships inform training. Our CHECK IVNNS training series uses an outcome-assessment model as its foundation. Lessons learned from this partnership will increase our understanding of the application of that model.”

Fitzgerald observes, “The CAA-Outreach partnership provides an excellent illustration of how multidisciplinary collaboration and community partnering can combine to assess the impact of programs designed to benefit young children and their families. Providing communities with proven 0-3 prevention programs enhances the quality of life for all members of the community, not just infants and toddlers.”
Children need support from the earliest grades to build reading and mathematics skills that will lead to academic and career success. The America Reads Challenge is specifically funded to provide an opportunity for college students who are eligible for the federal work-study program to support teachers, complement parents, and help ensure that all children can read well and independently by the end of third grade. The fundamental purpose of America Reads is to expand existing literacy efforts to help children increase content area achievement levels by providing them reading help with individual and extended learning time.

Building on the success of America Reads, the National Center for Public Policy and Education announced the America Counts program in November 1998. America Counts builds on the design model of the America Reads Challenge, focusing on work-study eligible elementary students to work as math tutors for elementary and middle school children. Tutors will assist young students in achieving the necessary skill levels to move into algebra and other high-level mathematics courses. The program was designed so that they can be replicated and extended to other schools and districts.

Outreach Partnerships has initiated a new publication called Best Practice Briefs. Briefs on not only the newsletter but a website that contains expert decisions and policy developers to have access to the human services knowledge developed and organized by MSU faculty.

Written by MSU faculty and edited by Betty Tableman, Outreach Brief, Briefs are issued monthly. The introductory issue was released in October 1998. A year’s subscription is $25. The publication is mailed to subscribers that are responsible for policy or planning, funding, and developing programs to improve outcomes for children, families, neighborhoods, and organizations.

The introductory issue addressed the paradigm shifts that are shaping the planning and delivery of human services. The November issue focused on the strength-based assets approach for improved outcomes. Upcoming topics include community mapping and full-service schools. In the planning stages are issues on evaluations based on outcomes, how environmental scanning can help shape effective services, parent-infant services, and community strategies to end hunger.

You may obtain a complimentary introductory issue or you can subscribe to the newsletter by sending an e-mail to Betty Tableman at bettabl@pilot.msu.edu or by calling Outreach Partnerships at 432-2500.

Early Editions of Linkages Available
The first two editions of Outreach Linkages: Spring 1998 and Summer 1998, are available on request for those who did not have the opportunity to read them.

The Spring 1998 issue focused on the scholarship of outreach and featured a lead article by Acting Vice Provost Robert Church titled “Learning from Collaborations” that described the community-university partnership approach to scholarly outreach. An article titled “Planning, Evaluating, and Rewarding Outreach” by Patrick Conely, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Letters, described the work of the faculty Committee on Evaluating Quality Outreach and the development of Points of Distinction: A Guidebook for Planning and Evaluating Quality Outreach. Other articles described partnership work through Applied Development and Education, designing faculty outreach portfolios, the Dexter Elmhurst Family and Community Services partnership, and an introduction to the Educational Ventures Office of University Outreach.

The Summer 1998 issue featured an article by Church on “Continuing Professional Education: A University Responsibility” and an article on the development of Summer Study programs offered to students and to undergraduates. Summer outreach projects involving faculty across campus were highlighted in articles about the Great Lakes Environmental Journalism Training Institute offered to reporters by the Environmental Journalism Program.

Please contact Pat Miller, Editor, if you would like copies of these previous issues. Call 432-0743 or e-mail <msmiller@pilot.msu.edu>.
MSU’s Points of Distinction Wins Award for Innovation

Lorilee R. Sandmann, Director of University Outreach, and Robert L. Church, Acting Vice Provost for University Outreach, accepted a prestigious award for innovation in higher education at the 86th Annual Conference of the University Continuing Education Association (UCEA). The award was given for MSU’s program Points of Distinction: Planning and Evaluating Quality Outreach that seeks to articulate the definitions and standards of quality outreach and integrate and institutionalize these concepts into university planning, evaluation, and reward systems.

The MSU Evaluating Quality Outreach Task Force, chaired by Sandmann, led the Points of Distinction initiative by developing and disseminating the resource guide. The task force was instrumental in engaging the university’s support to use this guidebook in the annual planning process and in reviewing promotion/tenure decisions; conducting national workshops and providing technical assistance; and applying the principles espoused in the guidebook to outreach grant reviews, portfolio development, peer review, and program development.

The Points of Distinction guidebook discusses four dimensions of quality outreach:

- **Significance** — To what extent does the outreach initiative address issues that are important to the public, specific stakeholders, and the scholarly community?
- **Attention to Context** — To what extent is the outreach initiative shaped by knowledge that is current, interdisciplinary, and appropriate?
- **Impacts** — To what extent does the outreach effort benefit and affect the issue, the community, or individuals or the university’s instruction and research mission?

Sandmann says, “I find the discussion in higher education shifting from whether we should engage in outreach to how we can engage in quality outreach. There’s a growing acknowledgment that higher education needs to transform itself to be more connected, agile, flexible, and responsive. And it needs to do this with constrained resources, greater accountability, and higher quality. I am pleased that MSU has been recognized for its contribution to this national effort.”

For further discussion of the Points of Distinction guidebook, request a copy of the first issue of Outreach Links & Spring 1998, from Pat Miller, Editor, at emling@pilot.msu.edu.